

Finding School Money Remains Tough Problem

By VINCENT THOMAS
Assemblyman, 68th District

"Dollars for Scholarships" is a perennial problem confronting us legislators. Just how to balance local tax resources with those of the state, maintain and improve local control of schools, and yet provide the highest quality of education at economical prices, is a puzzle, the parts which are constantly changing, so we have to re-do the solution every few years.

The subcommittee on school finance of the assembly interim committee on education held a meeting in Monterey a short while back, at which there was presented and discussed a proposal for a major shift in the tax burden for elementary and secondary schools. The product of the state department of Education working in close conjunction with educators and administrators, the proposal could become a new milestone in our California school progress.

The subcommittee told that the major problem still exists in our system of public school

support. Under it, it is not possible to provide for uniform use of locally taxable wealth, or to establish equality in the tax burden imposed on taxpayers in the different school districts.

DISTRICT boundary lines only too frequently separate children and taxable wealth, so there are wide variations between districts in ability and effort to pay school costs.

The present constitutional minimum requirement for "basic state aid" per pupil in average daily attendance is \$125 per year, but it is allocated without regard to a district's need or ability to pay.

An analysis of the variation in wealth between school districts, measured in terms of assessed valuation of property within the district per unit of attendance, shows that at the elementary school level, the wealthiest district has 7,000 times the resources of the poorest. At the high school level, the richest district has more than 55 times the wealth

of its poorest counterpart. Ratios of 75 to 1 in elementary districts, 10 to 1 in high school, are not uncommon.

A WHOLE SERIES of tables and charts were presented to the group to illustrate such variations. A few examples will demonstrate the seriousness of the differences. In Shasta County, the richest elementary district has an assessed valuation of \$427,185 per unit, the county average is \$12,811, the lowest \$8,474. In Kern, the

figures are \$602,964, \$12,999 and \$6,820 respectively. In Los Angeles, they are \$119,328, \$15,336 and \$14,494.

A number of possible solutions to the problem were mentioned to the subcommittee. First was the elimination or reduction of basic aid to all districts, his would enable minimum standards.

Second, would be the levy of a state property tax, which was not recommended.

Third, would be a county-wide tax for partial support of

the public school system. The details of such a program were presented at considerable length, including possible tax rates for both elementary and high school district.

SUCH a program would call for a county levy on all property within the county, at suggested rates of 60 cents per \$100 assessed value for elementary, and 50 cents for high school purposes. From revenues of this tax, basic aid would be paid to each district

at \$125 per unit. State "equalization aid" would continue, and local taxes as needed would be levied, to make up the total required for a high-level educational program in each district. The countywide tax would, in effect make the richer districts help the poor. No open opposition to the idea was expressed, perhaps because the recent law, tying state aid to the ratio between assessed values in counties as compared to the state average, had some effect.

Stiff Arson Laws Urged

Los Angeles County must support stiff penalties against the arsonist, Supervisor Burton W. Chace declared yesterday, as a means of reducing costly fires in mountainous areas.

Declaring that many of the county's most disastrous conflagrations have resulted from arson, Chace urged support for current proposals to tighten the arson laws.

"EVERY YEAR we are faced with the added cost of fighting

fires which have been miserably set. These are not only a threat to the safety of residents and firefighters, but they cause destruction of valuable properties and watershed areas," Supervisor Chace asserted.

The Board of Supervisors is supporting recommendations which will tighten definition of arson, increase penalties for attempted arson and require registration of convicted arsonists with police.

Sight & Sound

By Ernest Kreiling

HOLLYWOOD — "What I can't understand is why you write about television when you dislike it so!"

This rather definite comment was part of a letter I recently received from a woman. But it became more interesting the next day with the arrival of a card from a man who wrote, "You like TV too much to be a good columnist. The sadists who inflict such pernicious programming on the public will never improve it if 'critics' like you make it appear that TV's reached its zenith."

I knew there had to be a third viewpoint, and sure enough it arrived today. I was informed my columns reminded the lady of "the man who jumped off the fence and landed unequivocally on both sides." Her implication was that I couldn't make up my mind or was afraid to take a firm position.

WELL, I'VE looked over most of this year's columns and have concluded that the truth lies in the answer to the question, "Which columns did you read?"

Equivocal? Perhaps. But I don't see television in America today as a black or white issue. I consider TV to be better than many of its angry, irate and vocal critics claim, but not as good as broadcasters would have us believe. And I am convinced there is no such thing as a mystical perfection whereby it can please everyone all the time.

I watch and thoroughly enjoy a host of programs that aren't "good" by any standards, and I intensely dislike some programs that are supposed to be excellent. The point is that I don't approach television commentary with the belief that all networks and stations should program to my tastes alone.

FOR ONE thing most of us don't have a single rigid set of tastes and standards that

we bring to every program every night. I miss a lot of serious programs for the very simple reason that I'd rather watch something else. Recently I turned away from CBS' "Accent" to watch NBC's "Pedestrian Outlaws." I was too tired or to preoccupied to expend the necessary energy and effort to benefit from a TV tour through Jefferson's Monticello. There are times I find Steve Allen's delightful nonsense infinitely more appealing than CBS Reports.

Where TV is good and where it is improving lies in the fact that you and I have these choices to make. But as a columnist I'd be less than responsible if I raked the networks and stations over the coals for serving up entertainment Milltown like the Outlaws and Steve Allen, when I could have watched CBS Reports or Accent at the same hour.

IN SHORT it seems to be that a TV columnist who is patently FOR or AGAINST television as it stands today is guilty of a gross and unfair oversimplification, and he's probably not paying enough attention to the schedules or watching it enough to form a sound judgement.

One of my purposes in these columns is to discuss many aspects of the industry not frequently dealt with by most writers in the hope that I can help viewers enjoy TV more and enable them to judge and appraise it more validly.

AND THE incessant use of venomous invective and indiscriminate indictments in TV columns is not only inaccurate in my judgement, it's not in keeping with the facts. The single minded detractors continue to bewail the poor quality of TV programming, but two thirds of homes in America continue to tune in every night.

Simply, it's not all bad and it's not all good. This might be equivocation, but I think it's also reality.

FULL JALOUSIE

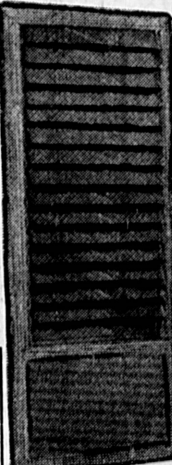
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